

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 NEW DE 07817 131336Z

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-06 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00

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O R 131225Z JUN 75

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 9226

INFO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMCONSUL MADRAS

USLO PEKING

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 7817

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, IN

SUBJ: GUJARAT ELECTION RESULTS EXACERBATE MRS. GANDHI'S  
DIFFICULTIES

REF: NEW DELHI 7767

SUMMARY: THE PEOPLES FRONT VICTORY IN THE GUJARAT STATE  
ELECTIONS (REFTEL) CONSTITUTES A SETBACK TO THE CONGRESS  
PARTY AND TO MRS. GANDHI PERSONALLY. THE GUJARAT  
VICTORY AND THE ALLAHABAD COURT DECISION HAVE  
STRENGTHENED THE OPPOSITION'S HAND, PROVIDING IT  
WITH ONE OF THE MOST TEMPTING OPPORTUNITIES TO  
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PAGE 02 NEW DE 07817 131336Z

CHALLENGE CONGRESS SINCE INDEPENDENCE. THE OPPOSITION'S

FIRST REAL TEST WILL BE IN PUTTING TOGETHER  
AN EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT IN GUJARAT. IT MUST ALSO  
MUSTER A UNITED FRONT OR PARTY TO CONFRONT CONGRESS  
IN THE UPCOMING NATIONAL ELECTIONS. THE GUJARAT  
RESULTS MAY STIR MORE DISSENTION WITHIN CONGRESS, PERHAPS  
EVEN AGAINST MRS. GANDHI STAYING IN OFFICE.  
THE COMBINATION OF THE ALLAHABAD DECISION AND THE  
GUJARAT RESULTS REINFORCE OUR VIEW THAT INDIA'S  
LEADERS WILL BE PREOCCUPIED WITH INTERNAL POLITICS  
OVER THE MONTHS AHEAD. END SUMMARY.

1. THE PEOPLES FRONT VICTORY IN THE GUJARAT STATE  
ELECTIONS (REFTEL) CONSTITUTES A SETBACK TO THE CONGRESS  
PARTY AND TO MRS. GANDHI PERSONALLY. AT THIS INITIAL  
STAGE, ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO  
RULING CONGRESS UPSET IS THE DIVIDED VOTE OF HERETOFORE  
SECURE MINORITY SUPPORT FOR RULING CONGRESS. MUSLIM  
SCHEDULED TRIBE AND CASTE GROUPS APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN  
DIVIDED, THOUGH PERHAPS NOT EVENLY, BETWEEN RULING CONGRESS  
AND PEOPLES FRONT. ANOTHER FACTOR CONTRIBUTING TO THIS  
SUCCESS, WHICH AWAITS FURTHER DETAILED ANALYSIS, IS THE  
DECIDEDLY REBELLIOUS AND/OR INDEPENDENT BEHAVIOR OF THE  
INDIVIDUAL VOTERS. AS MATTERS STAND, WE WOULD EXPECT  
PEOPLES FRONT TO TAKE THE INITIATIVE AND FORM A GUJARAT  
STATE GOVERNMENT DRAWING ON THE SUPPORT OF KMLP AND THE  
INDEPENDENT MLA'S. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHO WILL BE THE  
NEW CHIEF MINISTER ALTHOUGH BABUBHAI PATEL (CONGRESS-O)  
APPEARS TO BE THE FRONT-RUNNER AT THIS TIME.

2. THE CONGRESS DEFEAT IN GUJARAT FOLLOWING IMMEDIATELY  
THE ALLAHABAD HIGH COURT DECISION WILL LESSEN MRS. GHANDHI'S  
HOLD ON CONGRESS POLITICS AND THE INDIAN POLITICAL SCENE.  
THE GRIP WAS NEAR TOTAL IN 1971-1974, BUILT DURING THE 1971  
CRISIS AND VICTORY OVER PAKISTAN, AND THE OVERWHELMING  
1971 AND 1972 "INDIRA WAVE" MAJORITIES AT THE CENTER AND  
IN MOST STATES. (THE CONGRESS-R CAPTURED 140 OUT OF 168  
SEATS IN THE 1972 GUJARAT ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS.) J.P.  
NARAYAN'S POST-MARCH 1974 MORAL PROTEST MOVEMENT AGAINST  
CONGRESS CORRUPTION AND MISRULE BEGAN TO LOOSEN THE GRIP  
(ALTHOUGH HIS MOMENTUM HAS FALTERED IN RECENT MONTHS).  
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PAGE 03 NEW DE 07817 131336Z

THE DIFFICULT ECONOMIC SITUATION AND THE GRADUAL MOVEMENT  
TOWARD UNITY AMONG THE NON-CPI OPPOSITION PARTIES FURTHER  
ERODED HER POSITION. THE EVENTS OVER THE PAST TWO DAYS  
GIVES FRESH IMPETUS TO THIS TREND.

3. ONE OF THE MOST TEMPTING OPPORTUNITIES TO CHALLENGE  
CONGRESS AND THE NEHRU-GANDHI ERA IS NOW BEFORE THE  
OPPOSITION. TO EXPLOIT IT, THEY WILL HAVE TO MOVE RESPONSIBLY

IN GUJARAT, AND STRENGTHEN THE J.P. NARAYAN SUPPORTED MOVEMENT TOWARD A CREDIBLE NATIONAL ALTERNATIVE TO THE SPRAWLING CONGRESS PARTY. A HISTORY OF DIVISIVENESS AMONG THE CONGRESS OPPOSITION AUGERS ILL FOR THE PRESENT ATTEMPT. THE ABILITY OF THE FIVE-PARTY JANATA FRONT TO FORGE AND HOLD TOGETHER AN EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT IN GUJARAT WILL BE THE SECOND REAL TEST. (COOPERATION IN THE ELECTION WAS THE FIRST.) THEIR ABILITY TO MUSTER A UNITED FRONT OR PARTY AT THE CENTER PREPARATORY TO THE UPCOMING NATIONAL ELECTIONS WILL BE THE THIRD--AND ALSO THE BIGGEST--TEST.

4. THE GUJARAT DEFEAT WILL ALSO ADD TO MRS. GANDHI'S PROBLEMS IN CONGRESS AT A TIME WHEN SHE NEEDS UNDIVIDED SUPPORT. THE PRIME MINISTER THREW HERSELF INTO THE CAMPAIGN--AND INDEED PROBABLY STAVED OFF A GREATER CONGRESS DEFEAT BY HER EFFORT. BUT HER ASSOCIATION WITH THE DEFEAT MAY BE SEIZED BY HER COMPETITORS WITHIN CONGRESS, INCLUDING THE EX-SOCIALISTS. (ONE OF WHOM, EX-UNION MINISTER OF STATE MOHAN DHARIA, PUBLICLY ASKED HER TO STEP DOWN FOLLOWING THE ALLAHABAD DECISION.) CONSERVATIVES CONCERNED ABOUT INDIA'S POST-1969 TILT TO THE LEFT, AND SENIOR PERSONALITIES SUCH AS J.J. RAM AND Y.B. CHAVAN WHO MAY HARBOR A DESIRE TO MOVE UP TO INDIA'S TOP JOB THEMSELVES ARE ALSO POTENTIAL SOURCES OF INTERNAL PARTY DISCORD. THE SETBACKS TO HER PERSONAL AND POLITICAL POSITION WILL INCREASE THE INDEPENDENT POWER BASES OF SUCH REGIONAL CONGRESS LEADERS AS CHAVAN, RAM, BAHUGUNA IN UP, AND BRAHMANANDA REDDY IN AP.

5. ONE DAY AFTER THE ALLAHABAD DECISION AND WITH THE GUJARAT ELECTIONS JUST IN, INTRA-CONGRESS OPPOSITION TO MRS. GHANDH, EXCEPT FOR DHARIA'S STATEMENT, HAS NOT SURFACED. BUT IT MAY. DEPENDING ON ITS STRENGTH, IT COULD BE AN IMPORTANT FACTOR SHOULD MRS. GANDHI BE SERIOUSLY  
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PAGE 04 NEW DE 07817 131336Z

WEIGHING THE PROS AND CONS OF STAYING IN OFFICE.

6. THE COMBINATION OF THE ALLAHABAD DECISION AND THE GUJARAT RESULTS REINFORCE OUR VIEW THAT INDIA'S LEADERS WILL BE LARGELY PREOCCUPIED WITH INTERNAL POLITICS OVER THE MONTHS AHEAD.  
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## Message Attributes

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